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AUTHOR Meyer, Peter; Petry, Sherry L.
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ABSTRACT

The goals of the conference on off-campus education were designed to review (1) the continuing and integrative nature of education for all persons involved in the partnership of learning; (2) the uniqueness of off-campus education; (3) the place of off-campus education; and (4) criteria for evaluating the learning that occurs. Trends in experiential education were discussed in relation to classifying off-campus experiences, setting goals for off-campus education, evaluating off-campus learning. An in-depth investigation of off-campus education is recommended. A supplementary essay on experiential education is included. (MJM)

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Off-Campus Education: An Inquiry

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Report of a Conference / Southern Regional Education Board

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Report of a Conference

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Off-Campus Education: An Inquiry

By
Peter Meyer
and
Sherry L. Petry

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Contents

Introduction 3

Trends in Experiential Education 7

Conclusions and Recommendations 17

Experiential Education: One Point of View 21

Participants 23

Introduction

The Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Conference on Off-Campus Experiential Education, funded by a grant from the Esso Education Foundation, was conceived as an initial inquiry into the educational dimensions of service-learning internships with the intent of developing a design for more extensive research into the subject following the conference. A major factor leading to the Board's sponsorship of the conference was the service-learning internship program which SREB had administered over the previous five years.

Service-learning internships are unique because they accomplish simultaneously several goals that would ordinarily be achieved sequentially. Service-learning links the world of work with the academic world to the advantage of both and with a vitality that makes the whole of the experience much more than the sum of its parts. Such programs encourage both service-oriented action and self-directed learning. It is a dynamic relationship between performance of a useful service for society and the disciplined interpretation of that experience to increase one's understanding of one's self and the human condition. Moreover, the coupling of action and reflection can be more than a useful technique for the performance of a task and for educational enrichment; at its best, it can lead to the development of a life-style.

Service, of course, is the means by which an individual can contribute to the welfare of others or of the community. But service is also a means by which an individual can grow and find fulfillment as a human being. The learning dimension of the service-learning concept recognizes the need for honest and rational interpretation of such experiences. A disciplined approach is the best one for increasing understanding of the human condition. The coupling of service and learning thus encourages the student to develop a life-style characterized by sensitivity, maturity, commitment, and creativity.

The contribution of students as extra manpower and the use of field assignments to give a student experience are not peculiar to this internship program. However, in the SREB internship pattern the linking of service and learning provides experiences and opportunities for discovery and growth not usually found in student jobs or academic field experience programs.

Up to the time of the conference proposal primary emphasis in service-learning internships had been placed on their service component but little had been done to evaluate their education benefits. In each student intern program, each experience was validated against its own set of criteria; frequently different criteria were used for each experience. There was a growing need to consider whether reliable assessment devices could be developed that would measure the educational dimensions of service-learning

internships against more universal criteria. The development of evaluative mechanisms, however, must be preceded by a consideration of what constitutes educational success. This is difficult enough to ascertain in traditional classroom settings and seems virtually impossible where there are no traditional standards.

The growing interest of the higher education community in finding new ways to complement and supplement traditional classroom methodology also provided impetus for a conference on off-campus experiential education. The changing nature of the college student over the past fifteen years has caused colleges and universities to look more closely at the needs of the students than they had been accustomed to doing in the past. Throughout the South, as well as the rest of the country, institutions have begun to experiment with such nontraditional methods as independent study, community-based educational experiences, and credit by examination as well as service-learning internships.

The small, private liberal arts colleges have led the trend to recognize and accept the challenge of new methodologies and programs. The large public institutions have been, and continue to be, more reluctant to break out of the traditional classroom lecture mold, especially in the undergraduate liberal arts area.

Because of the widespread interest in off-campus education and the hope that common characteristics in the various program types could be found, the original intent of the conference was gradually expanded. By the time funds were granted—several months after formulation of the proposal—the scope of the inquiry included many kinds of off-campus education in addition to service-learning. Prospective conference participants were invited to consider all off-campus programs that 1) give or merit academic credit, 2) are part of an approved curriculum which also includes traditional classroom activities, and 3) promote the validity of experience as a learning process. It was felt that a number of people already involved in off-campus education and thus familiar with its characteristics could define the common denominators of off-campus education programs and discover means of evaluating them.

In planning the conference, the director was operating under several philosophical assumptions or biases which, in all fairness, should be made explicit. The first of these assumptions was that off-campus education should be a part of the curriculum of *all* higher education and not limited to experimental programs. It was felt that the curriculum needs to be much more responsive to the needs of the total community that it serves. Educational benefits resulting in a fresh and expanded view of self in a changing society are not only the due of the student intern but can be expected to occur for all persons involved in a project. An exchange of experiences as well as ideas among members of the college community results in a two-way stream of teaching and learning in which different roles are assumed at differ-

ent times. A study of the educational dimensions of off-campus experience would thus consider and promote the concept of students, faculty-counselors, administrators, and agency supervisors as partners in learning.

The conference director also felt that it was important to consider off-campus experiential education as part of a curriculum which also includes traditional classroom activities. Although it is possible to think of an institution or a degree program that devotes all of its efforts to off-campus education and although those programs which are totally breaking with tradition cannot be ignored, the major change in higher education will need to take place within a rather traditional framework.

The director had in mind that experiential education is a process which draws upon experience; that is, what is learned from experience can be just as valid as what is learned from books. The ideal education would interweave the theoretical pattern of knowledge with the practical application of that knowledge. Furthermore, experiential education implies the possibility, even the desirability of beginning with the raw experience and weaving the theoretical into that experience rather than the other way around. No attempt was made before the conference, however, to develop a formal definition of off-campus experiential education. Development of a definition was left as a prerogative of the conference itself.

Conference goals were established and distributed to participants. Specific major problems to be considered were: 1) the continuing and integrative nature of education for all persons involved in the partnership of learning, 2) the uniqueness of off-campus education, 3) the place of off-campus education in the curriculum of higher education, and 4) criteria for evaluating the learning that occurs.

The conference started with a discussion of terminology. The attempt to define "experiential education" alone consumed more time than it was worth.* Other confusing terms such as "experiential learning," "off-campus education," and "cross-cultural learning" were also discussed, but definitions could not be found that were acceptable to all. Consideration of a problem as basic as terminology, however, served to reveal the divergent orientations of conference participants and to establish an atmosphere of participation and exchange that was beneficial in later discussions.

Trends in Experiential Education

As conferees struggled to define experiential education, they discovered they could not agree whether or not education should dictate the kinds of skills and capacities to be encouraged. It was agreed that the desire to educate implies that the educator has made value assumptions about the individual and his role in society. But since values may vary among educators, universities, communities, and cultures, the conference participants declined to specify what skills and capacities were necessary for the formulation of an individual's value system. The individual's learning is incorporated into his education when it is weighed against his value system and applied to meet the needs of self and society as interpreted by that system. The temptation to narrowly define desirable values had to be resisted again in later discussion of learning objectives.

The terms "off-campus education" and "experiential education" were used interchangeably during the conference, primarily for convenience. It was recognized that off-campus education is connotative of the *place* of learning and does not necessarily exclude the classroom format of lectures and textbooks. Similarly, experiential education connotes the *manner* of the learning process, which can take place in the classroom, but to a lesser extent. Thus the two are not, in fact, synonymous.

Classifying Off-Campus Experiences

Conference participants found it was easier to describe types of off-campus education than it was to agree on a definition. Most off-campus education programs can easily be placed in one of five categories: social action, independent study, work, in-

*The definition that was finally accepted—in some cases quite reluctantly—by conference participants reads as follows: *Experiential education is composed of the methods and content of a process which utilizes the actual or potential experience of learners for the development of human, life-affirming skills and capacities, a form of learning not entirely new to the American academic order which recognizes the worth of the direct nature and content of experiences as well as the growth achieved by reflection upon and inferences drawn from that experience.*

ternational experience, and community-building.

Social action and work projects both stress a work component, but with different purposes. Social action assumes involvement with an agency whose purpose is to effect social change. The student himself is concerned about and involved in effecting change; monetary remuneration may be part of the project, but it is not the sole motivating force behind the student's participation. A legislative internship would be an example of social-action experience. Work, or gainful employment, by contrast does not necessarily have a social orientation. It is a "fair day's pay for a fair day's work" and has one purpose—satisfaction of the student's financial needs.

A community-building project may be an assigned task such as digging a well or raising livestock and thus have characteristics of a social-action experience, but its primary purpose is the development of relationship or community among participants. A work camp or a communal farm would fall into this category. An independent study project allows a student to pursue a special interest by himself and is characteristically academic.

These vehicles of off-campus education do not always occur in pure form. An international experience may contain elements of the other categories; independent study may be conducted on a job. Some projects elude any classification and necessitate the establishment of a sixth category that would include special or individual projects such as publication of a volume of poetry or a hitchhiking tour of the country. But even this incomplete classification illustrates the potential diversity of off-campus learning situations. Of course, this very diversity also compounds the difficulty of establishing common objectives and evaluative mechanisms that could apply to all experiential education programs.

Setting Goals for Off-Campus Education

The conference produced two sets of objectives for off-campus education. The shorter, more concise set included four major learning objectives and encompassed the more specific listings of the second set. The similarities of the two statements are interesting in light of the fact that they were formulated simultaneously by two separate groups of conferees. Since the probability of attaining these goals is much enhanced, if not guaranteed, by the nature of the off-campus experience, it was felt that the worth of off-campus education as a recognized, accredited component of higher education is unquestionably justified by these objectives.

The first objective of off-campus education is *to help the student examine and develop his own life style.* The separation from the campus and immersion in off-campus learning encourage and frequently demand the student's consideration of his own identity. He becomes enmeshed in realities larger than himself. The classroom is no longer separated from the action of life. As the community, environment, or circumstances

of his new learning situation free him from traditional campus rigidities and expectations—real or imagined—the student becomes more open, more curious, more willing to experiment. He can appreciate and be more aware of his physical senses. His total personal involvement may provide the student the opportunity for self-awareness that could find expression in art or heightened religious consciousness.

Here again, the conference was tempted to stipulate what *type* of life style off-campus education should encourage a student to develop. It was suggested, for example, that caring and sensitivity were desirable attributes and that the student should be motivated toward a life style of service or benefit to society. The parental urge to guide the student in a chosen direction was overridden, however, in favor of allowing the student to come to grips with his experience unfettered as much as possible by institutional and cultural expectations.

Second, an off-campus experience should *foster the development of the student's capacity to examine the experience and interpret the learning* that has occurred. The student may discover values, theories, and behavioral styles that are implicit in his actions and, as a result of this new learning experience, choose either to discard or develop them further. The intensity of the off-campus experience magnifies the opportunity to absorb information and develop new theories. The product hoped for and the mark of education is the student's ability to interpret and integrate the material.

The third major objective is *to develop and enhance firsthand knowledge of fundamental human concerns by providing the student with the opportunity to examine a variety of cultural values and draw implications for his own personal commitments.* Fundamental human concerns in this context are understood to include individual concerns such as ultimate questions of existence and death as well as social concerns that result from one's relating to a wider human community. Again, conferees felt an urge to endorse certain values as desirable ones for a student to attain, but after discussion declined to do so.

Finally, off-campus education proposes to help the student *develop personal skills in setting and achieving goals, identifying and solving problems, and exercising initiative and independence in dealing with human and institutional relationships.* A college campus can be a shelter where many of the student's needs are provided for, whereas an off-campus setting forces a student to care for his own needs. He may be required to develop a sense of direction, accept responsibility for certain tasks, and become emotionally independent. From the greater variety of learning resources in the world community he can pursue a selected life style, design a project that he deems valuable, establish routines and means of accomplishing the project, and, through reaching his objective, realize that he is a competent, creative person. He may be able to develop different working, learning, or personal relationships with a directness and freedom

difficult to achieve or sustain in an academic environment.

Conference participants were satisfied that the objectives they established were comprehensive enough to cover all types of off-campus experiences, yet general enough not to be restrictive. Obviously the four major objectives would not be equally desirable or attainable in every off-campus experience, but it is impossible to imagine an experience that would not touch on some aspect of each objective.

Cross-Cultural Off-Campus Experiences

Cross-cultural off-campus experiences are particularly valuable. A cross-cultural experience is defined as an involvement for an extended period of time with people of different race, status, age, nationality, or with people who have radically different values or ways of thinking. It can be a component of any of the five types of off-campus education already outlined.

The total cross-cultural experience includes immersion in the alien culture of whatever variety, the student's return to his native culture, and examination of the native culture from a changed perspective. A transformation of the self is the inevitable result of such an experience. The degree of the transformation depends on the degree of strangeness of the alien culture, the length of time spent in the new environment, and, of course, the receptiveness of the student. For example, it is likely that time spent in western Europe would result in more significant changes than time spent with a group of senior citizens at home. Likewise, an experience in Asia would probably cause greater transformation than one in a western European culture.

Students who participate in cross-cultural experiences tend to become more aware of their own basic cultural assumptions, more interested in their own roots, and more concerned with applying what they know to their own societies. The experience makes them more open, curious, and willing to experiment. Thus the cross-cultural experience, especially the international kind, greatly enhances the learning that occurs.

Follow-Up for the Off-Campus Experience

It is the task of the university to help the student accomplish his learning goals and to bring into harmony the objectives of the university and the objectives of the student. Evaluation of and credit for the off-campus experience, matters to be covered in detail below, are part of the support provided by the university. Another crucial supporting service is the provision of adequate follow-up for the student after he returns to campus. Planned follow-up helps the student build on his off-campus experience by interpreting his old environment in a new way. This is particularly pertinent for off-campus education of the cross-cultural variety. Cross-cultural exposure presents the student with greater problems of adjust-

ment and integration when he returns to campus than do other varieties of off-campus experience. Conferees stressed the responsibility of the university at this point because, even though the student's needs are obvious, the university has been most lax in providing meaningful follow-up to help the student survive his initial culture shock and incorporate his experience in his continuing education.

A credited class or seminar that deals directly with the student's recent experience and helps him to develop perspective on it is one means of providing follow-up. The possibility that students can learn from each other should be seen as a vital part of their education; means for students to share with each other should therefore be pursued vigorously.

The student may also be allowed the opportunity to lecture or lead discussions as a guest in other classes. Such an opportunity challenges him to reflect on and evaluate his experience in his old setting, where professors and students who have not had his experience may not be receptive to his new outlook.

A Model for Service-Learning Internships: An Approach to Evaluation

Before confronting the question of how off-campus learning can be evaluated, the conference considered a model for off-campus programs presented by one participant; it was felt a model would be helpful in developing approaches to evaluation. The model that was examined gives concrete form to the roles and relationships of components in a community-based experience with a strong service-learning emphasis. It was agreed that such a model was particularly relevant because community-based programs, more than other kinds of off-campus education, have lacked credence in the academic world. Educators are experienced in defining objectives and evaluating individual learning experiences off campus because it has been possible to adapt traditional forms of evaluation, such as tests, to individual experience. However the benefits derived from a project based in the community are more elusive, and most educators have avoided dealing with the issue.

The service-learning model indicates that two questions are to be answered by the intern's experience: What is worth doing and what is worth knowing? What is worth doing is outlined in a list of such specific tasks available for the intern in the community as research, planning, organizing, and direct action. What is worth knowing would emerge from the performance of such tasks; for example, the intern might acquire awareness and integration of self, and develop personal and technical skills.

At the center of community-based experience are the learners: a student intern, an agency supervisor, and a faculty counselor. The traditional internship model has accepted the intern as the learner and assigned the supervisor and counselor supportive or guidance roles. This pattern, however, fails

to recognize the learning potential and needs that exist for the supervisor and counselor, who can experience and benefit from increased awareness, reevaluation of self, and further development of their own skills. Having once recognized the identity of their goals, all participants can relate to each other as partners in learning. Mutual benefits are gained as each person, from his own perspective, defines specific tasks and immediate objectives, implements the project, provides feedback on progress, and develops additional service-learning opportunities.

In the model situation the learners receive support from a public agency or community program and a university or college, which also stand to gain from participating in the experience. The agency that provides the student with a meaningful task, necessary tools, and supervision benefits from the student's fresh insights, his contribution in manpower, and his extended witness to and support of its program. The university benefits by making a contribution to public service, developing alternative learning patterns, encouraging interdisciplinary activity, and facilitating the application of theory to reality.

Support is available from other sources, too. The interns themselves teach each other through daily association, conferences, and seminars. Their sharing contributes to their understanding of the intricacies of complex public issues and helps each to understand his role in the community.

Technical and financial assistance to the project from yet another level can come from a state internship office, which might also provide liaison service with other programs, conceptual models, and promotion of outside support for program goals. Area or campus internship coordinators within the state assist by interpreting tasks and relationships, developing needed resources, and coordinating administrative details.

Evaluating Off-Campus Learning: Basic Considerations

It was quickly evident that a single method for assessing all kinds of off-campus education is simply not feasible. Moreover, it was agreed that traditional forms of evlauation such as exams and papers may not be applicable to the nontraditional learning experiences that occur off campus. Lengthy discussion, however, did at least yield an approach to evaluation and guidelines to be applied in specific situations. Discussion also produced a consensus concerning the role of off-campus education in higher education. The approach to evaluation chosen by the conference was predicated on acceptance of that role.

Because of the focus of the conference itself and because of the professional involvements and personal biases of the conference participants, the benefits of off-campus education were in danger of being over-rated. The tempting extension of this bias, which would have led to a polarization of on-campus and off-campus education into an either-or relationship, was emphatically rejected. Off-campus and on-campus learning are not

dichotomous modes of learning. On the contrary, off-campus learning merges the processes of off-campus student experience with traditional on-campus classroom processes in a complementary way. The off-campus experience can be viewed as the site of learning, the classroom the place of development and reflection. The classroom can thus serve as either preparation for or evaluation of off-campus experiences, just as it has traditionally, if unconsciously, served as preparation for or evaluation of the student's total off-campus life experience. Thus, the off-campus experience is a part of and necessary to the total education process and must be evaluated in that light.

Certain assumptions are based on this approach to off-campus education:

1. The concept of reward and achievement utilized in the classroom, as exemplified by the use of academic credit, applies with equal validity to the educational experience off-campus.
2. The off-campus experience must be carefully planned by the student, appropriate program personnel, and off-campus representatives, when appropriate, and meticulously implemented by the student while he is off campus.
3. The college program staff must supervise both the experience and any components contributing thereto during the time the student is off campus, utilizing off-campus representatives where appropriate.
4. His analysis of the experience is to be recorded by the student so that the educational validity can be demonstrated.

Evaluation of off-campus learning actually begins when the project is first defined, for assessment must be based on the project's objectives. Precise and measurable goals must be agreed upon from the outset so as to reduce the difficulty of determining whether and to what degree objectives have been met. Individual contracts negotiated between the college and the student may be the best means of defining project goals, since they allow for the widest variation in project ideas. Indeed, personalized contracts may be a necessity for those colleges that are willing to allow students to explore the outer limits of experiential possibilities. Such a contract anticipates and defines the learning benefits to be achieved through a particular experience and specifies standards of performance that the student is to attain.

A contract must be flexible enough not to inhibit the learning potential of the situation. Failure to achieve a predetermined goal may not signify a student's failure. A goal, though set in good faith, may turn out to be beyond the scope of the project, while other goals, initially unintended, may emerge. Of course, the contract should not be so ambiguous as to allow for any situation, but it should be subject to revision as the student progresses. The student's understanding of why goals have or have not been achieved would be part of the contract evaluation and would be a valid measure of his reflective capacity.

New College in Sarasota, Florida, is one example of an institution operating solely on a contractual basis. Contracts are arranged

on a one-term basis by each student, who works with a selected faculty sponsor. The written contract includes immediate and long-range goals, educational activities to be pursued, peripheral activities, and criteria for certification. The salient feature of the contract arrangement at New College is its adaptability to any interest or activity the student wishes to pursue and its ability to accommodate any changes that become necessary. Changes in the plan or even complete renegotiation of the contract are possible until midway through the term.

Certain key issues should be taken into account as criteria for evaluating off-campus experiences are established. One such question would be whether or not the experience generates further study or opens up other interests which the student might pursue. Another might be the extent to which the student is able to communicate the experience or its result. Was the experience relevant for him? Can he incorporate it into other life situations? The range of the student's exposure can also be evaluated in light of the scope of the project to determine whether he utilized available resources.

The conference identified four areas in a student's development that could be analyzed for the purpose of evaluation.

The first and perhaps most readily recognized and accepted area of development is the comprehension of a specified body of knowledge. Acquisition of a specified body of knowledge is frequently the primary goal of an independent study and as such would be the major focus of the evaluation.

A second area for evaluation is the acquisition of skills. Motor, perceptual, and intellectual skills can all be considered. Projects requiring increased facility with either artistic or mechanical tools, equipment, instruments, or machines develop motor skills. The creation of a product or demonstration of a talent as a result of the experience is the mark of achievement of a motor skill. Projects encouraging a sensitivity to detail and completeness, an awareness of the nuances of human relationships, and a facility for resolving and clarifying interpersonal issues develop perceptual skills. The third level of skill development, the intellectual, is evidenced by analytical competence, language facility, or the ability to organize and manipulate information.

The third and fourth areas, personal development and attitudinal changes, are often for the student the most obvious and beneficial developments. Initiative, autonomy, tolerance for frustration, and appreciation of ambiguity and complexity are among the characteristics which might undergo notable changes during the internship. Exposure to different cultures, needs, and perspectives may effect radical changes.

Evaluating Off-Campus Learning: Methods

If off-campus education is to be recognized as a complementary and integral part of higher education, it must in no way impede or prolong the student's progress toward his ultimate goal, a degree. At some

point, therefore, the learning gained from the off-campus experience must be translated into academic credit; that is, the experience must be converted into terms recognized by the institution and accepted as partial fulfillment of degree requirements. Since a degree in most institutions is granted only upon receipt of specified credits, the off-campus experience must be converted into that common denominator.

The traditional tools of testing—examination, demonstration, and writing—can be applied variously, depending on the situation. Panels composed of faculty members, students, project supervisor, and others related to the experience can provide evaluation supplementary to or in lieu of other devices. It is not assumed that all criteria or every method will be applicable to every off-campus experience or that all criteria and methods have been discovered.

Because off-campus education is a departure from traditional educational practices, and because there is little precedent for or experience in granting academic credit for off-campus projects, internships which have been mounted have often earned little or no academic credit for their participants. This pattern can easily be misinterpreted as implying that off-campus education has less value than on-campus education. The failure of existing off-campus experiments to win much in the way of official recognition has the net effect of saying "it's been tried here and its value is very limited" when, in fact, the failure simply demonstrates how very difficult it is to find satisfactory means of evaluating a new and different way of learning.

Clearly, the fate of off-campus learning is in the hands of those educators whose task is to explore every possible means of maximizing the credit and benefits available to the student who participates in off-campus projects.

The interdisciplinary nature of many off-campus experiences requires an evaluative procedure that allows credit to be earned in several fields. For example, a community-based experience that exposes the student to issues in sociology, economics, and political science and requires the exercise of writing skills is worthy of credit in all those fields. An independent study of the effects of an insecticide may be worth credit in biology, chemistry, and even geology. Joint evaluation by a faculty panel representing the separate disciplines encountered in the experience is particularly valuable in such cases.

The conference recommended general guidelines for the conversion of off-campus education to academic credit:

1. An approved experience that is entirely off-campus, away from the student's normal place of residence and involves total responsibility for all living and learning activities for the entire period should result in the same academic credit being earned as would be earned, on an average, for the same period of time in the classroom. For example, if an experience qualifies, a student off campus for one semester should earn 15 semester hours credit, the

same credit he would receive if he were carrying an average load on campus.

2. An approved off-campus experience which is undertaken on a part-time basis while the student is concurrently enrolled in classroom studies should result in partial academic credit relative to the duration and extent of the experience. For example, a planned and approved off-campus experience two days each week for an academic term should result in academic credit perhaps one-fourth of an average full-time academic load.

The conference considered the issue of academic credit at great length but with much reluctance. It was felt that although academic credit has served very well as a tool to indicate progress toward a degree in traditional educational settings, it is no longer a viable measurement of progress and that any attempts to utilize a credit system for off-campus learning may be a proverbial square peg—round hole situation. A different kind of unit altogether, perhaps time or number of kinds of experiences, should be used to measure education. Such major change in our educational system, if it occurs at all, will face much opposition and will certainly not be widespread for many years. In the meantime, educators will be faced with the question of proper and uniform assessment of off-campus education.

The conference participants devoted attention to all of the issues identified in advance; they felt that, considering the time limitations of a conference setting, the results were both gratifying and meaningful.

The nature of off-campus education, including its objectives and its role in the larger context of the student's whole education, was a major focus of discussion. After they had worked many hours formulating and revising definitions of and learning objectives for off-campus education, conference participants had to admit that they had succeeded in only describing education in general; their definitions were as applicable

Conclusions and Recommendations

to campus as to off-campus education! Education as a whole proposes to assist the development of life styles, foster the capacity for reflection, enhance knowledge of human concerns, and develop personal skills; these goals are not unique to the off-campus setting. The experiences which contribute to the achievement of learning objectives can occur in, as well as out of, the classroom. It thus became clear that the merit of off-campus education does not lie in the uniqueness of its process and goals; rather, its worth is in the ease and intensity with which its goals can be attained. The immediacy and comprehensiveness of off-campus experiences have a catalytic effect on the learning process that is difficult to duplicate in the classroom. The stimulation and enhancement of learning inherent in off-campus environments demonstrate the complementary role of off-campus education within higher education.

The importance of experiential learning has long been accepted in the natural sciences, where major portions of departmental budgets are devoted to laboratories and field stations which make *doing* the essence of learning. To a lesser extent, the social sciences have also recognized the learning benefits to be gained from firsthand experience but have not been as successful as the natural sciences in assimilating experiential learning into the curriculum. The humanities for the most part have tacitly denied the relevance of off-campus experiences for its disciplines. However, the conference refused to advocate off-campus education as being more relevant to one field than to another; the necessity and worth of off-campus education for all disciplines and phases of higher education was emphatically endorsed.

The conference also devoted major attention to the development of methods of evaluation which would measure the effectiveness of off-campus education. Criteria relevant for the evaluation of various off-campus experiences were suggested, as were areas of student learning to which the criteria could be applied. The inadequacy of evaluative tools and mechanisms now used by universities was acknowledged; present methods frequently restrict the student's learning experience and recognize only a narrow range

of the learning benefits actually gained. Agreement on methods of evaluation that could be applied to the wide spectrum of off-campus education was found to be impossible, however. The only agreement that was reached was that individual criteria for individual experiences could be set and then evaluated, but that the range of experiences was too broad to allow for fully standardized measurement.

The conference touched but did not dwell on another issue specified for consideration, namely, the concept of partnership in learning. The concept of coequal relationships in learning is at the heart of service-learning intern programs, in which several persons join forces to accomplish mutual goals by contributing individual perspectives and skills for the learning model that was developed. The conference did not concern itself, however, with further development of the counselor and supervisory roles or with the dynamics of the interpersonal relationship defined thereby.

Although conference participants agreed unhesitatingly that each had benefited personally from conference discussions and was satisfied with the group's accomplishments during the three days, they also pointed to the pressing need for additional extensive, in-depth exploration of all facets of off-campus education. They concluded that a major research effort that would incorporate all materials now available and develop recommendations from the research findings would provide valuable support and guidance both for colleges contemplating developing off-campus programs and for those struggling to expand and improve programs now in existence.

Such research should explore the known varieties of off-campus education, examine their characteristics, goals, and success, and evaluate techniques utilized and judge their contributions to the total educative process. Guidelines for program management should be developed that would include information on staffing, funding sources, selection of applicants, criteria for evaluation, and academic credit. The inclusion of program models would be helpful.

Since one of the major problem areas of off-campus education programs is the difficulty of evaluating the kinds and amount of learning that have occurred, a major focus of the research should be on the question of evaluation and academic credit for the student. Conference participants requested that a complete collection of evaluative tools (such as tests) used by various colleges be compiled and that an annotated bibliography be distributed so that these tools could be shared. Samples of other devices that assist in learning and which may be used in evaluation such as journals, reaction sheets, and workshop formats should be collected.

Part of the problem inherent in developing off-campus education programs, as in any new program, is the lack of coordination and precedent, which assist in strengthening one's position and winning converts. Conference enthusiasm in itself is certainly not sufficient to persuade academicians of the educational worth of active life-involvement.

More than a suggestion is needed to change the old view of off-campus experience as a brief but pleasant and stimulating diversion from the task of getting an education to recognition of its rightful place within education.

Conferees agreed that an investigation of off-campus education of the scope and depth requested would require full-time staff in a long-range effort. The product of such a research effort is envisioned as a practical resource book for future program development as well as a source of information on off-campus programs already in existence.

Experiential Education: One Point of View *

Charles C. Lyons

The phrase "experiential learning" is redundant. Most of us would never say "wet water" or "physical sex," but we seem very comfortable discussing experiential learning, tacitly acknowledging that there is some other kind. There isn't. To understand or realize something new means that it becomes part of our own individual foundation; we have made it real. This is experience. This is learning.

Man has never enjoyed living in chaos, so he invents schemes and structures that provide systems through which he can regularize, label, and feel comfortable with his various and sometimes paradoxical senses of reality.

The best of these schemes withstand time and new experiences; they become theories. Theories can be shared. Unlike experiences, which cannot be canned, disseminated, and vicariously assimilated, theories can be explained, communicated, and remembered. I can't take your pain, bewilderment, and confusion, but I can tell you about a way to perceive those things which cause you problems, a way that enables me to live with those things in my reality. And perhaps if you try, my scheme—my theoretical patterning—will be of use to you.

Theories can be taught through words and remembered by the learner. They are meaningful, however, only if they provide a framework through which a person can view, structure, interpret, his experiences.

To understand a theory requires appropriate experience. This trivial sounding statement tends to be ignored. Imagine explaining to a Bushman how to drive a car! How about his attempt to explain that to another Bushman? If you are a parent, remember your schemes for raising children before you had any. A homomorphic image of any group is isomorphic to a subgroup of that group. (What does that mean)?

A man, after a lifetime of experience in a field, develops a theory; this is necessary for him in order to sense coherence. He wants, perhaps needs, to share it. With whom? Each of us wants to share our reality, simultaneously having it reinforced.

We teach. We try to communicate our own theories and other people's theories. We have students who wait for new schemes, new insights from us. We try. They try. "Clunk!" The missing ingredient is experience. Without the meat of experience to interact with and fill out the skeleton of theory, there is no body of understanding.

Experiential learning, deep learning, real learning, learning, is the synthesis of raw experience and intellectual structuring.

*This essay on experiential education was offered several weeks after the conference on Off-Campus Education. As a synthesis and reflection from one participant's perspective, it is in itself a product of the experiential process.

Neither component is very worthwhile in itself, but when they fuse a man builds on the foundation of his life.

Why the "clunk" in the classroom? Theories and structures abound: obviously the experiential component is missing. Particularly as man's intellect develops and society allows for full-time intellectuals, theories proliferate and become more esoteric. The classroom becomes a place of nonexchange between a professor who may or may not know what he is talking about and a group of students whose inadequate experiential background absolutely precludes a meaningful assimilation of the theories being presented. "Clunk!"

Students, quite realistically, are demanding more experiential components in these curriculums. They need them. As off-campus programs, internships, and cross-cultural activities spread across the country, many academicians feel threatened. What has happened to intellectual activity, standards, the definition of college? In reality these experiential programs support the academics. Without them the students lack the experience that would enable them to understand the ideas of the classroom. Observe how natural science students cry the least of irrelevance, sit-in the least for curriculum reform. They have the laboratory for experience. Historically, perhaps by accident, their curriculums have developed with natural experiential components. Fewer "clunks," more "a-has."

Far from being a threat to the academician, experiential programs for his students promise to save him and his college at a time when our society could very easily take a strong anti-intellectual, anti-university stance.

In summary, real learning is a mutually reinforcing fusion of experience and interpretive structure. As our available structures become more complex and seemingly removed from reality, the need for appropriate experience increases. Experiential programs do not threaten the intellect or the academician; rather they provide the student with a background of experience through which relevance becomes a classroom reality.

Participants

Bruce Belvin, Intern
Texas Service Learning Program
Beaumont, Texas

Katherine Ericson, Director
Pittsburgh-Chatham Program
Chatham College
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Walter Gordon, Intern
Governor's Intern Program
Atlanta, Georgia

Michael Hart, Associate Project Director
Student Intern Project
Southern Regional Education Board

J. Renwick Jackson, President
St. Mary's College of Maryland
St. Mary's City, Maryland

John Jacobson, Dean
Florida Presbyterian College
St. Petersburg, Florida

David Kiel, Intern
North Carolina Internship Office
Raleigh, North Carolina

Keith Lupton, Assistant Professor
Director, Off-Campus Term Program
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

Charles Lyons, Acting Provost
New College
Sarasota, Florida

Douglas Moore, Vice President
Minnesota Metropolitan State College
St. Paul, Minnesota

Joseph Mulholland, Associate Dean
Lincoln Center Campus
Fordham University
New York, New York

Rex Nettelford, Director
Extra-Mural Studies
University of the West Indies
Jamaica, West Indies

William R. O'Connell, Jr.
Director of Special Programs
Southern Regional Education Board

Robert Sigmon, Director
North Carolina Internship Office
Raleigh, North Carolina

Conference Director

Peter Meyer, Project Director
Student Intern Project
Southern Regional Education Board

Secretary

Joyce Gates, Project Secretary
Student Intern Project
Southern Regional Education Board